

never proved good. My original hen bird had been kept twenty years in confinement before I had her; the male bird was said to be only a year old when it came to me. The only nest made by the old Owls is a shallow hole scratched in the earth at the bottom of the cage. I have introduced a lining of short straw into the hole after the first egg is laid. The earth is scratched away from the hole by both birds; but the cock commences the operation, and performs the greater part of it. The period of incubation is thirty days, and one week usually elapses in addition between hatching the first egg and the last. The Owls are kept in a cage about eight feet square and about the same in height, and are fed on rats, rabbits, and birds.

Easton, Norfolk, May 7th, 1859.

XXVIII.—*Characters of an undescribed Species of Hawk from New Caledonia.* By PHILIP LUTLEY SCLATER.

(Plate VIII.)

MR. GURNEY has kindly entrusted to me for examination some specimens of Rapacious Birds which he has lately acquired from New Caledonia. Amongst them is an example of a species of Hawk apparently hitherto unnoticed, and which I have little hesitation in considering as new. Its simple style of coloration has induced me to propose to call it

ACCIPITER HAPLOCHROUS. (Plate VIII.)

Saturate schistaceus, capite et dorso medio nigricantioribus: nuchæ plumis intus albis: rectricum pogoniis internis pallidè schistaceis, vittis numerosis nigricantibus subobsoletè transfasciatis: abdomine toto a pectore medio cum crisso, tibiis et alarum tectricibus inferioribus albis: pectore medio et remigum pogoniis internis subtus albis, nigro transversim lineatis: rostro plumbescenti-nigro; pedibus auran-
tatis, unguibus nigris: long. tota 14·5, alæ 9·3, caudæ 6·6, tarsi 2·6.

Hab. in ins. Novâ Caledoniâ.

The single specimen of this bird sent is labelled as a female. It was killed on the island "Nu," Port de France, New Caledonia, in April 1858, and appears to have been prepared by Mr. John Macgillivray.

The nearest ally of this fine species that I am acquainted with

is the *Accipiter poliocephalus* of Mr. G. R. Gray, from the Aru Islands, described in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society' for last year*. It is, however, quite distinct in coloration from that bird. Other near relatives seem to be *Accipiter rufitorques* †, of the Feejee Islands, *Accipiter hyogaster* ‡, of Amboyna, and *Astur trinotatus* §, of Celebes. Mr. Gurney thinks that these species, together with the well-known so-called Goshawk of New Holland (*Astur novæ hollandiæ*, Gould, B. Austr. i. pls. 14, 15), constitute a small group of stout-built Hawks, which may be considered in some degree distinct. The term *Leucospiza*, proposed by Dr. Kaup for the isolation of *Falco novæ hollandiæ*, might be employed for the subgeneric denomination of these birds. They are all remarkable for simplicity of coloration in an Order where this is the rule rather than the exception.

Besides *Accipiter haplochrous*, Mr. Gurney received three other species of Accipitres in the same collection, namely, *Haliastur sphenurus* (Gould, B. Austr. i. pl. 5), ♂ and ♀, killed at Port S. Vincent, New Caledonia, May 21st, 1858; *Astur approximans* (Gould, B. Austr. i. pl. 7), ♀ juv., from "Nu," New Caledonia, March 21st, 1858; and three examples of a *Circus*, probably identical with *Circus assimilis*, as figured in Gould's 'Birds of Australia' (i. pl. 26). The latter were obtained in Port de France and Port S. Vincent in March, April, and May, 1858.

Mr. G. R. Gray has lately communicated to the Zoological Society a "List of New Caledonian Birds," which was read at their Meeting on May 10th last; and gives a complete account of what is known of the ornithology of this island.

The accompanying figure of *Accipiter haplochrous* is by Mr. Wolf, and represents the bird reduced to one-third of its natural dimensions.

* See P. Z. S. 1858, p. 170.

† *Accipiter rufitorques*, Peale, Zool. U. S. Expl. Exp., Birds, p. 68; Cassin, *ibid.*, ed. 2. p. 90, Atlas, pl. 2. figs. 1 & 2. This species is figured by M. M. Hombron and Jacquinot in Plate 2 of the Atlas of the "Voyage au Pol Sud," as "*Epervier oceanien*, ♀ ou variété"; their "*Epervier oceanien* ♂," being referable to *Accipiter hyogaster*. See Dr. Pucheran's remarks in the "Zoologie" of the same work, vol. iii. p. 48.

‡ *Falco hyogaster*, Müll. Verh. Ethn. p. 110.

§ *Astur trinotatus*, Temm. MS.: Bp. Cons. i. p. 33.

XXIX.—On the Ornithology of Northern Africa. By the Rev.
H. B. TRISTRAM, M.A., F.L.S. (Part II. *The Sahara*.)

[Continued from page 162.]

(Plate IX.)

THOUGH I speak of “The Sahara” as the term is commonly used in Europe, for the great Northern Desert of Africa, yet the employment of this word in such a sense is not strictly accurate. The Arabs divide Africa north of the Line into three portions, the Tell, the Sahara, and the Desert; the Tell being the corn-growing country from the coast to the Atlas; the Sahara, the sandy pasture land where flocks and herds roam, from the Atlas through the Hauts Plateaux or Steppes, to the region where all regular supply of water fails; and the Desert, the region which extends thence almost to the watershed of the Niger—arid, salt, affording no sustenance to cattle or sheep, but where the camel snatches a scanty subsistence, and which is, excepting in its rare oases, equally inhospitable to man. It is to the feathered denizens of these vast tracts south of the Atlas that I propose to confine my observations in this paper, *i. e.* to the birds which inhabit the deserts, or resort to the various oases which I visited from 1855 to 1857.

If any reader of these remarks has formed his idea of the great African Desert from Turner’s well-known picture, with its unbroken horizon line on all sides, a dying camel in the foreground, and a vulture soaring aloft the only objects to break its monotony, let him at once dispel the misty illusion. Imagine rather what the north-eastern portion of England would be if completely drained of its streams and denuded of its vegetation: wooded dells transformed into rocky naked nullahs, and tillage plains covered with a soil pulverized by the combined action of heat, wind, and attrition.

With all its monotony, the Desert has its varieties. One day you laboriously pick your steps among bare rocks, now sharp enough to wound the tough sole of your camel, now so slippery that the Arab can scarce make good his footing. Another day you plunge for miles knee-deep in loose suffocating sand-drifts, ever-changing, and threatening to bury you when you halt.



ACCIPITER HAPLOCHROUS.